

WELCOME
BY THE HONORABLE SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

Governing is about choosing – about picking priorities ... today's forum is to talk more about the choices Congress has made in the current budget ... choices with which I profoundly disagree.

Budgets of the United States reflect our values as a nation – it is the blueprint for all our spending.

Our recently-passed budget clearly does not value children's health and education ... it does not value seniors ... it does not value economic development ... and it does not value homeland security.

A great many things have been said about this budget – yet not that many of them have actually been heard beyond Washington.

As citizens – as taxpayers – we are all stakeholders under this budget.

Through this budget, the federal government has chosen to institute a whole new age of unfunded mandates on the states – which is why we held this forum on Austin.

Budgets reflect who we are and what we value.

The recently passed budget simply does not represent the values that we say are important to us in this nation.

We have cut \$71 billion to the states (from FY 06-10) – and that does not include Medicaid, which may be included in that.

People have been astounded at the depth of cuts in the federal budget, which means: Texas students will be less likely to stay in school or go to college ...

- Texas veterans will be forced to pay a tax for their health care ...
- low income Texas children will be sicker with the cut in health benefits ...
- seniors fear losing benefits under Medicaid cuts and dismantling Social Security ...
- and all of us are less safe due to cuts in border security, including port security, Border Patrol, detention services and less first responder funding.

Here in Texas, we simply cannot afford monumental new unfunded mandates on the states, at a time when states have less and less money to spend to supplement federal dictates.

CONGRESSWOMAN EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

The budget is a reflection of our values and priorities as a nation. U.S. Congress should support a federal budget that will make us more competitive in the global economy, spread prosperity to more Americans, and reestablish fiscal discipline to ensure a better future for our children.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution that does not reflect Texas priorities or values.

It cuts Medicaid more deeply than the President's proposal – as much as \$20 billion over five years. Slashing Medicaid will have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable in my District and our State.

Medicaid is the health care safety net for impoverished children, elderly, and the disabled. Reductions to Medicaid will cause lasting harm to current Medicaid beneficiaries and make the system less viable for health care providers.

Exactly who will be affected by cuts to Medicaid?

- 39 million low-income children and parents, including 1 in every 4 American children and 13 million elderly and disabled individuals who are receiving acute and long-term care coverage.
- This budget would also increase the number of uninsured, which has already risen to 45 million people under this Administration. Sick people cost more when they're uninsured — and receiving care in emergency rooms — than when they're covered by Medicaid.
- This budget would put our children at risk. If children have less health care, they are more likely to compromise their ability to learn in school and to grow into healthy, contributing members of society.
- Cuts to Medicaid will shift costs to states, increasing their already significant fiscal burdens. Cuts and block grants don't address the real challenges states are facing: Medicaid enrollment increases which have occurred as a result of more people losing their health care coverage. Shifting additional costs to the states will likely drive them to cut Medicaid coverage and services.

To reduce or eliminate health care coverage for poor, elderly, and disabled people in order to finance tax cuts for the wealthy is inequitable and not in line with our nation's values.

Today's forum will hear directly from everyday Texans who must live with the choices made in the federal budget.